HILAIRE BELLOC'S

CAUTIONARY TALES

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CAUTIONARY TALES

Child! do not throw this book about;
  Refrain from the unholy pleasure
Of cutting all the pictures out!
  Preserve it as your chiefest treasure.

Child, have you never heard it said
  That you are heir to all the ages?
Why, then, your hands were never made
  To tear these beautiful thick pages!

Your little hands were made to take
  The better things and leave the worse ones.
They also may be used to shake
  The Massive Paws of Elder Persons.

And when your prayers complete the day
  Darling, your little tiny hands
Were also made, I think, to pray
  For men that lose their fairylands.

CAUTIONARY TALES FOR CHILDREN

DEDICATED

TO

BOBBY, JOHNNY, AND EDDIE

SOMERSET

Hilaire Belloc's

CAUTIONARY TALES

ILLUSTRATED ALBUM EDITION

WITH THE ORIGINAL PICTURES BY

B. T. B.

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY
SALLY HOLMES HOLTZE

GREGG PRESS
BOSTON

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j B41 C

With the exception of the Introduction, this is a complete photographic reprint of a work first published in New York by Alfred A. Knopf in 1941.

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Introduction

MOST of the poetry available to a child living at the turn of the century had been familiar fare for decades. Children were well supplied with moralizing prose and verses which extolled the virtues of good behavior. This sort of poetry, exemplified by the verses of Jane and Ann Taylor, was the inspiration for Hilaire Belloc's brilliant parody, *Cautionary Tales*. In the Taylors' *Little Ann and Other Poems* (1882), illustrated by Kate Greenaway, the following poem appeared:

The idle and bad
Like this little lad,
  May love dirty ways to be sure;
But good boys are seen
To be decent and clean,
  Although they are never so poor.

What dullness is exhibited in these uninspired lines! And similar verses were illustrated by, in addition to Greenaway, such other prestigious artists as Randolph Caldecott. The young recipients of these books must have been grateful for the illustrations, which at least provided a modicum of amusement.

In 1896, a little fresh air was let into the stuffy English nursery, with the publication of Hilaire Belloc's *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts: Verses*. Humor mixed with irreverence produced verses like this one:

> The Big Baboon is found upon
> The plains of Cariboo.
> He goes about
> with nothing on
> (A shocking thing to do).
> But if he
> dressed respectably
> And let his whiskers grow,
> How like this Big Baboon would be
> To Mister So-and-So!

The first edition sold out in four days, and in 1897 its sequel, *More Beasts (for Worse Children): Verses* was published. Ten years later, *Cautionary Tales for Children: Designed for the Admonition of Children Between the Ages of Eight and Fourteen Years: Verses* was published. The poems contained in *Cautionary Tales* sounded like familiar didactic poetry; yet the meter was more precise. Belloc's verses appeared to be moralistic; yet the effect was not boredom, but laughter. *Cautionary Tales* was conceived as a parody of the mediocre fare of poets like the Taylors — and it *was* a parody — but it was actually made up of better poetry than the poetry Belloc chose to imitate.

How could children go back to the plodding verses that condescended to them in such tiresome moralizing, after they had met the girl in "Rebecca, Who slammed Doors for Fun and Perished Miserably"? The very language of Belloc's tales seemed to inform children that the stilted phraseology of their previous books had been a sham. Belloc carefully imitated the prescribed language of his predecessors, as in this excerpt, when firemen are called to Matilda's house:

> With Courage high and Hearts a-glow
> They galloped, roaring through the Town (p. 19)

Then he used less conventional, more comic wording to introduce more humor into a wild scene in which Matilda's house undergoes unnecessary destruction due to her terrible lies:

> And took Peculiar Pains to Souse
> The Pictures up and down the House (p. 20)

The tales were a refreshing change for early 20th-century readers, and they stand alone as delightful humor today; readers need not be familiar with the poetry Belloc mocked. The humorous tales, with their punishments all out of proportion to the nature of the children's crimes, are timeless in their ability to entertain.

The three books were illustrated by Basil T. Blackwell. His wild caricatures sometimes show a sophistication in technique, and sometimes seem amateurish, but always convey exaggerated expressions that leave no doubt as to the frivolity of the punishments be-

falling careless and naughty children. There is so much life in the pictures that they alone evoke laughter from children.

The opportunities for artists to illustrate Belloc's humorous verses are ripe. An excellent picture book now in print in the U.S., entitled (without Belloc's commas), *Matilda Who Told Lies and Was Burned to Death* (1970). A winner of the *New York Times* Choice of Best Illustrated Books of the Year in its year of publication, it is a wonderfully inventive treatment of the straightforward story. Lest readers be the least bit worried over the admittedly beastly child's death, Kellogg adds a bit of his own narrative pictorially by portraying a characteristically mischievous Matilda in the heavens, directing rain onto her virtuous aunt. Other illustrators of Belloc's humorous verse include Nicolas Bentley and Harold Berson.

Readers of this introduction might understandably assume that Belloc was a children's book writer, but in fact his humorous writing was only a minute part of what he published in his 83 years. Belloc was born in France in 1870 and became a British subject in 1902. After graduating from Balliol College, Oxford, where he was a Brackenbury History Scholar, he began writing short pieces for publication in magazines. He was astonishingly prolific as an essayist, novelist, historian, poet, translator, and editor, and wrote well over 100 books; yet he was always troubled by debt and poverty. He was also a fascinating character, a devout Roman Catholic who doggedly applied his religion to every aspect of his life, including his political views, and this devotion was a handicap to his career.

Belloc wrote, "I am used to Insult, as I combine in one person . . . A)Poverty. B)Papistry. C)Pugnacity. Any one of the three can just swim, but when all three come together the victim sinks" (from *Yesterday's Authors of Books for Children*, 1977). Indeed, he was a difficult man to deal with; he was so unpredictable in temperament that a friend describes him as "ruder and more courteous, kinder and yet more pugnacious, than any man I have ever met" (*Selected Cautionary Verses*, Penguin Puffin edition, 1964). Despite the problems he felt other people had with his Catholicism — he complained that his historical perspective wasn't what either Catholics *or* Protestants wanted to teach, and he was told that his religious fervor would prevent him from being elected to a professorship at Glasgow University in 1899 — he received many honors in his lifetime. He served in Parliament from 1906 to 1910; he was honored by the Pope; he had honorary degrees from Glasgow University and from Dublin University. Belloc was a passionate man of great knowledge, who worked unceasingly. And he was a man who understood and liked children.

He knew children's tastes for the kind of incredible disasters that occur in *Cautionary Tales*, and he produced these calamities in just the right exaggerated style, so that children could never take the punishments seriously. Because of his skill, his humor, and his art, readers of *Cautionary Tales* continue to find the book memorable and enjoyable.

Sally Holmes Holtze
New York City

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More Beasts (for Worse Children): Verses (London: Arnold, 1897); (New York: Arnold, 1897).

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INTRODUCTION

Upon being asked by a Reader whether the verses contained in this book were true.

And is it True? It is not True.
And if it were it wouldn't do,
For people such as me and you
Who pretty nearly all day long
Are doing something rather wrong.
Because if things were really so,
You would have perished long ago,
And I would not have lived to write
The noble lines that meet your sight,
Nor B. T. B. survived to draw
The nicest things you ever saw.

H. B.

Jim,

Who ran away from his Nurse, and was eaten by a Lion.

There was a Boy whose name was Jim;
His Friends were very good to him.
They gave him Tea, and Cakes, and Jam,
And slices of delicious Ham,
And Chocolate with pink inside,
And little Tricycles to ride,
And

read him Stories through and through,
And even took him to the Zoo—
But there it was the dreadful Fate
Befell him, which I now relate.

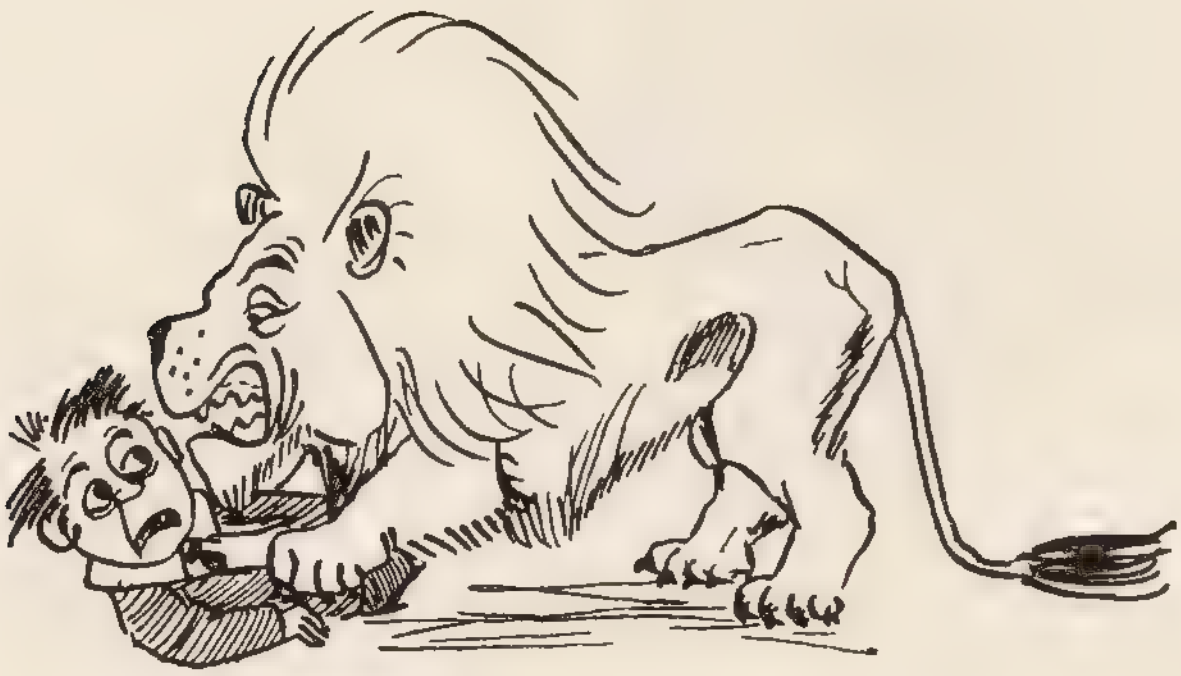
You know—at least you *ought* to know,
For I have often told you so—
That Children never are allowed
To leave their Nurses in a Crowd;

Now this was Jim's especial Foible,
He ran away when he was able,
And on this inauspicious day
He slipped his hand and ran away!
He hadn't gone a yard when—

Bang!

With open Jaws, a Lion sprang,
And hungrily began to eat
The Boy: beginning at his feet.

Now just imagine how it feels
When first your toes and then your heels,
And then by gradual degrees,
Your shins and ankles, calves and knees,
Are slowly eaten, bit by bit.



No wonder Jim detested it!
No wonder that he shouted "Hi!"
The Honest Keeper heard his cry,
Though very fat

he almost ran
To help the little gentleman.
"Ponto!" he ordered as he came
(For Ponto was the Lion's name),
"Ponto!" he cried,

with angry Frown.
"Let go, Sir! Down, Sir! Put it down!"

The Lion made a sudden Stop,
He let the Dainty Morsel drop,
And slunk reluctant to his Cage,
Snarling with Disappointed Rage
But when he bent him over Jim,
The Honest Keeper's

Eyes were dim.
The Lion having reached his Head,
The Miserable Boy was dead!

When Nurse informed his Parents, they
Were more Concerned than I can say:—
His Mother, as She dried her eyes,
Said, "Well—it gives me no surprise,
He would not do as he was told!"
His Father, who was self-controlled,
Bade all the children round attend

To James' miserable end,
And always keep a-hold of Nurse
For fear of finding something worse.

Henry King,

Who chewed bits of String, and was early cut off in Dreadful Agonies.

The Chief Defect of Henry King
Was

chewing little bits of String.
At last he swallowed some which tied

Itself in ugly Knots inside.

Physicians of the Utmost Fame
Were called at once; but when they came
They answered,

as they took their Fees,
"There is no Cure for this Disease.
Henry will very soon be dead."
His Parents stood about his Bed
Lamenting his Untimely Death,
When Henry, with his Latest Breath,
Cried—

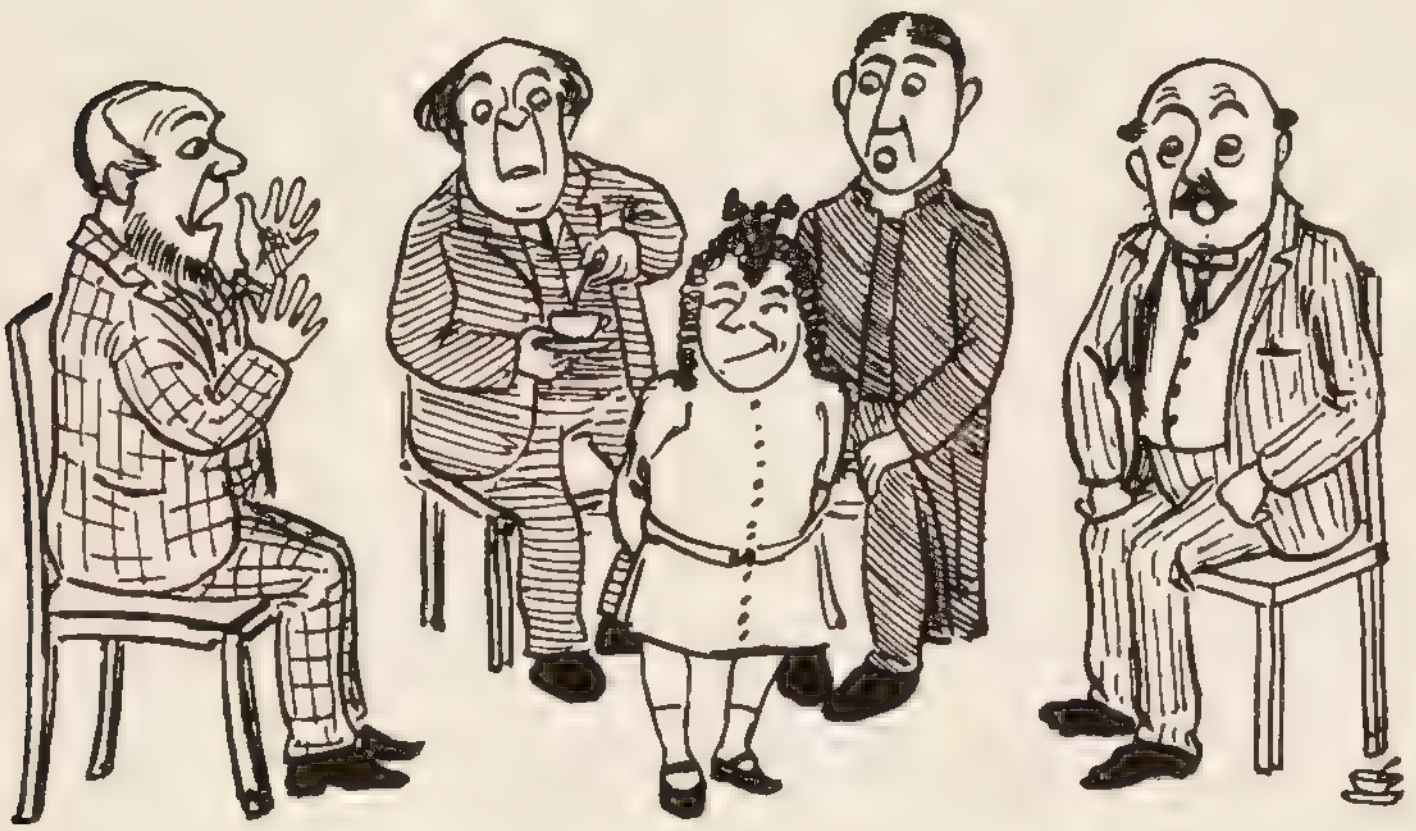
"Oh, my Friends, be warned by me,

That Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch and Tea
Are all the Human Frame requires . . ."
With that the Wretched Child expires.

Matilda,

Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death.

Matilda told such Dreadful Lies,



It made one Gasp and Stretch one's Eyes;
Her Aunt, who, from her Earliest Youth,
Had kept a Strict Regard for Truth,

Attempted to Believe Matilda:
The effort very nearly killed her,
And would have done so, had not She
Discovered this Infirmity.
For once, towards the Close of Day,
Matilda, growing tired of play,

And finding she was left alone,
Went tiptoe

to

the Telephone

And summoned the Immediate Aid
Of London's Noble Fire-Brigade.
Within an hour the Gallant Band
Were pouring in on every hand,
From Putney, Hackney Downs and Bow,
With Courage high and Hearts a-glow
They galloped, roaring through the Town,

"Matilda's House is Burning Down!"
Inspired by British Cheers and Loud
Proceeding from the Frenzied Crowd,
They ran their ladders through a score
Of windows on the Ball Room Floor;
And took Peculiar Pains to Souse
The Pictures up and down the House,

Until Matilda's Aunt succeeded
In showing them they were not needed
And even then she had to pay
To get the Men to go away!

. . . . .

It happened that a few Weeks later
Her Aunt was off to the Theatre
To see that Interesting Play

The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.

She had refused to take her Niece
To hear this Entertaining Piece:
A Deprivation Just and Wise
To Punish her for Telling Lies.
That Night a Fire *did* break out—
You should have heard Matilda Shout!
You should have heard her Scream and Bawl,

And throw the window up and call
To People passing in the Street—
(The rapidly increasing Heat
Encouraging her to obtain
Their confidence)—but all in vain!
For every time She shouted "Fire!"

They only answered "Little Liar!"
And therefore when her Aunt returned,

Matilda, and the House, were Burned.

Franklin Hyde,

Who caroused in the Dirt and was corrected by His Uncle.

His Uncle came on Franklin Hyde
Carousing in the Dirt.
He Shook him hard from Side to Side
And

Hit him till it Hurt,

Exclaiming, with a Final Thud,

"Take

that! Abandoned Boy!
For Playing with Disgusting Mud
As though it were a Toy!"

MORAL

From Franklin Hyde's adventure, learn
To pass your Leisure Time

In Cleanly Merriment, and turn
From Mud and Ooze and Slime
And every form of Nastiness—
But, on the other Hand,
Children in ordinary Dress
May always play with Sand.

Godolphin Horne,

Who was cursed with the Sin of Pride, and Became a Boot-Black.

Godolphin Horne was Nobly Born;
He held the Human Race in Scorn,
And lived with all his Sisters where
His father lived, in Berkeley Square.
And oh! the Lad was Deathly Proud!

He never shook your Hand or Bowed,
But merely smirked and nodded

thus:

How perfectly ridiculous!
Alas! That such Affected Tricks
Should flourish in a Child of Six!
(For such was Young Godolphin's age).

Just then, the Court required a Page,
Whereat

the Lord High Chamberlain
(The Kindest and the Best of Men),
He went good-naturedly and

took

A Perfectly Enormous Book
Called *People Qualified to Be*
Attendant on His Majesty,
And murmured, as he scanned the list
(To see that no one should be missed),
"There's

William Coutts has got the
Flue,

And Billy Higgs would never do,

And Guy de Vere is far too young,

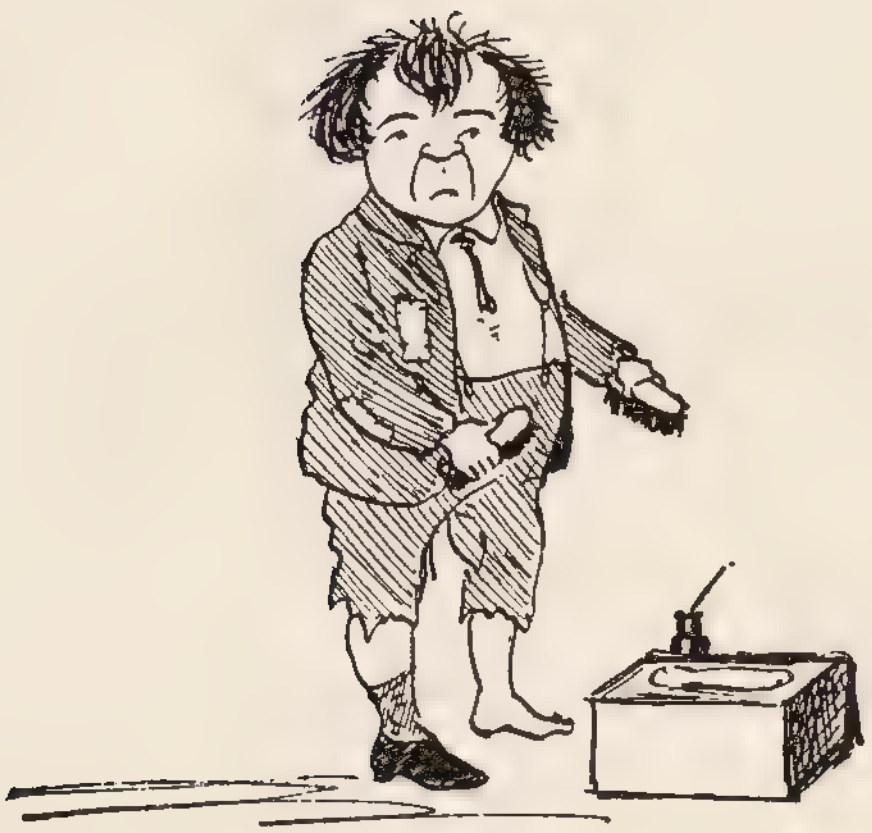
And . . . wasn't D'Alton's Father hung?
And as for Alexander Byng!— . . .
I think I know the kind of thing,
A Churchman, cleanly, nobly born,
Come

let us say Godolphin Horne?"
But hardly had he said the word
When Murmurs of Dissent were heard.
The King of Iceland's Eldest Son
Said, "Thank you! I am taking none!"
The Aged Duchess of Athlone
Remarked, in her sub-acid tone,
"I doubt if He is what we need!"
With which the Bishops all agreed;
And even Lady Mary Flood
(*So* Kind, and oh! so *really* good)
Said, "No! He wouldn't do at all,
He'd make us feel a lot too small."
The Chamberlain said,

". . . Well, well, well!
No doubt you're right. . . . One cannot tell!"
He took his Gold and Diamond Pen
And

Scratched Godolphin out again.
So now Godolphin is the Boy

Who blacks the Boots at the Savoy.



Algernon,

Who played with a Loaded Gun, and, on missing his Sister was reprimanded by his Father.

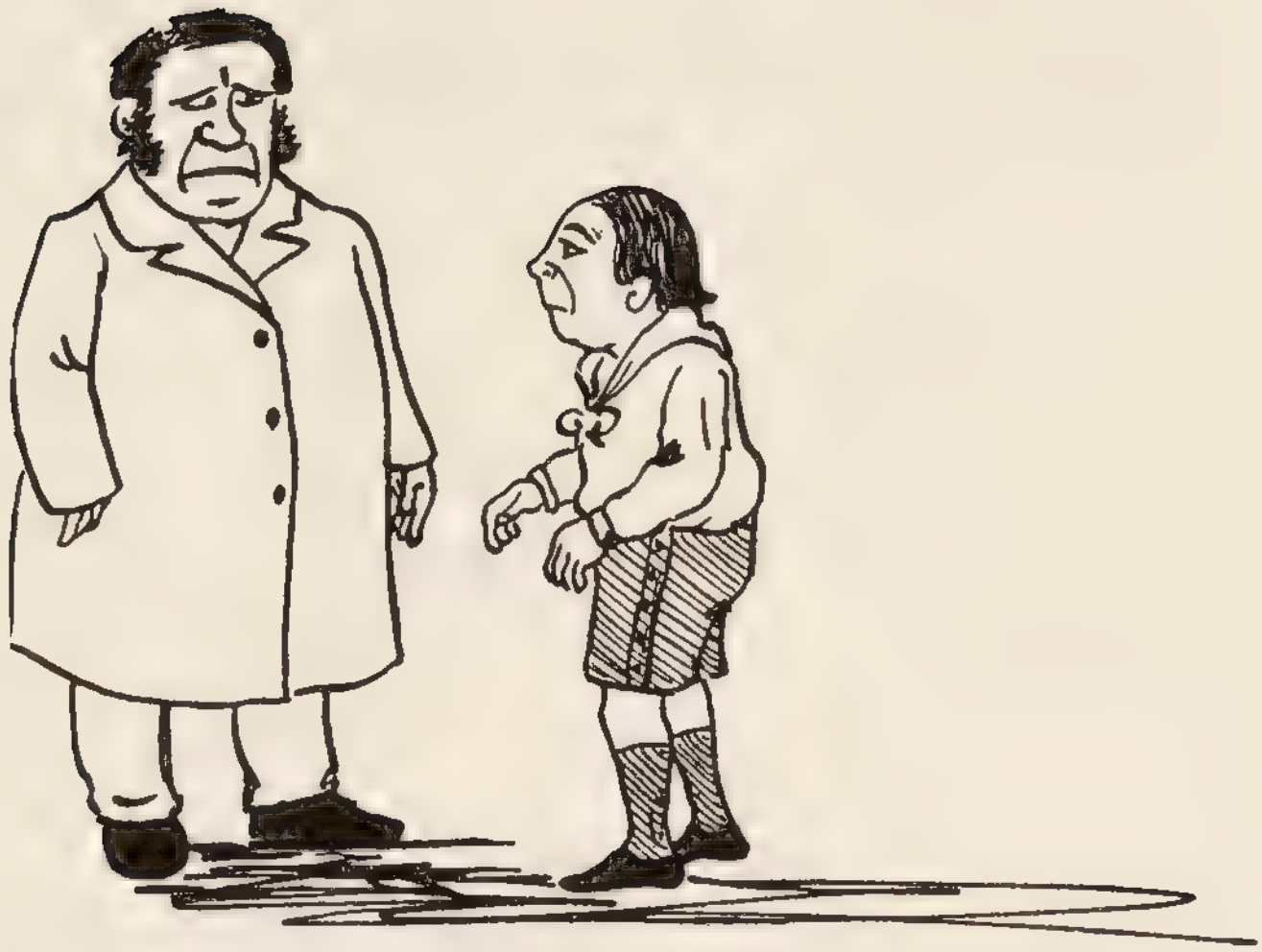
Young Algernon, the Doctor's
Son,
Was

playing with a
Loaded Gun.
He pointed it to-
wards his sister,
Aimed very care-
fully, but

Missed her!

His Father, who was stand-
ing near,

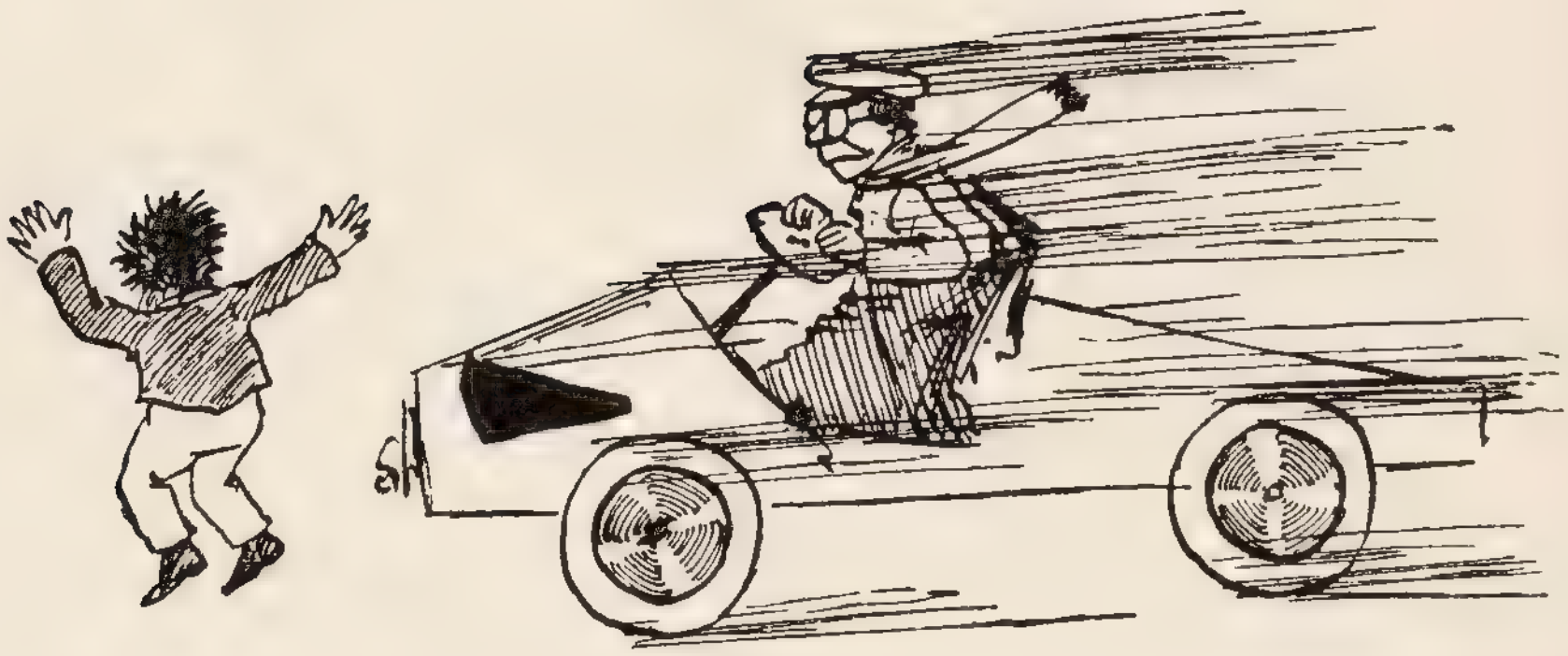
The Loud Explosion chanced to Hear,



And reprimanded Algernon
For playing with a Loaded Gun.

Hildebrand,

Who was frightened by a Passing Motor,
and was brought to Reason.



"Oh, Murder! What was that, Papa!"

"My child,

It was a Motor-Car,

A Most Ingenious Toy!

Designed to Captivate and Charm
Much rather than to rouse Alarm
In any English Boy.

"What would your Great Grandfather who

Was Aide-de-Camp to General Brue,

And lost a leg at

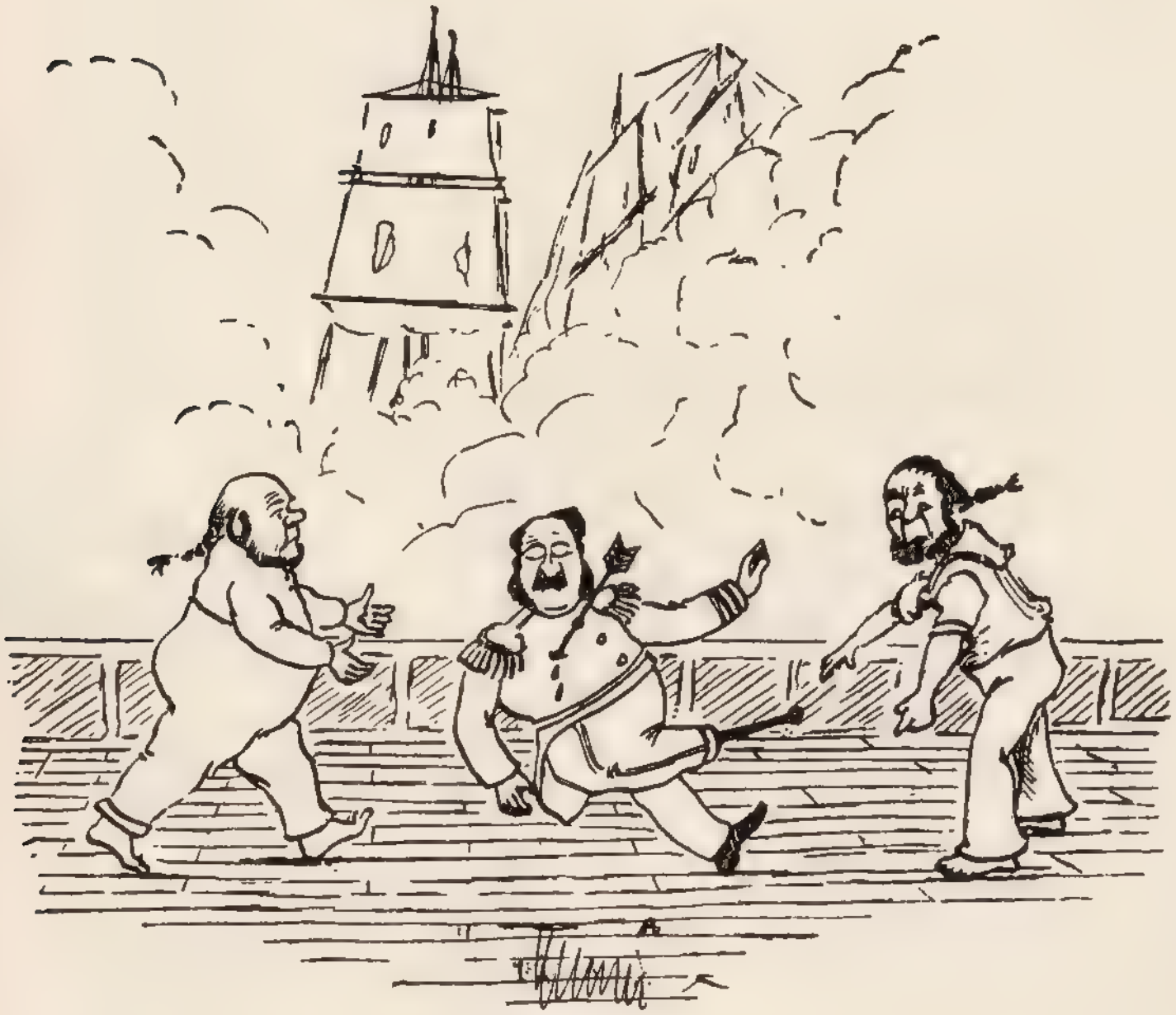
Waterloo,

And

Quatre-Bras and

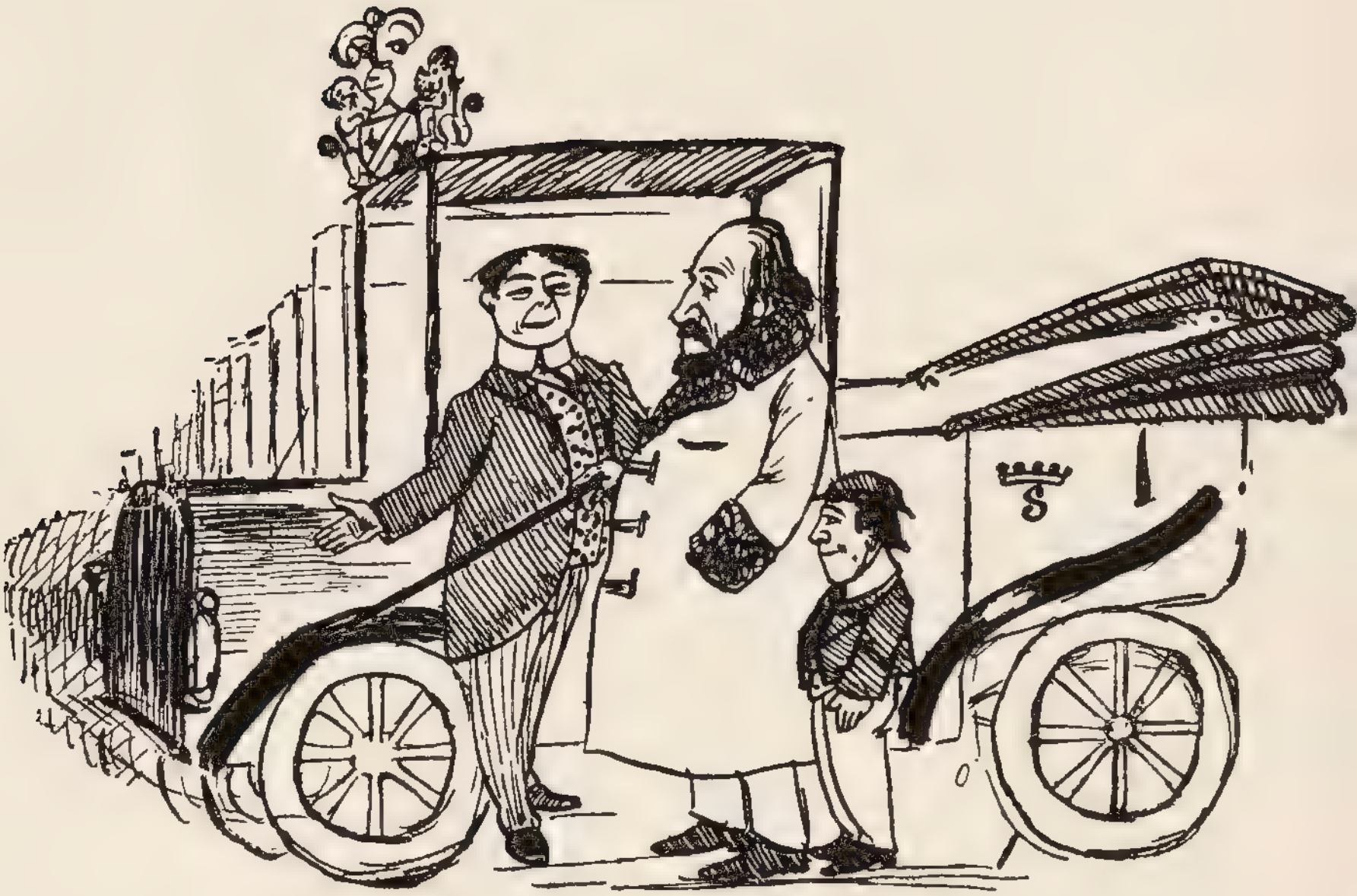
Ligny too!

And died at Trafalgar!—



What would he have remarked to hear
His Young Descendant shriek with fear,
Because he happened to be near
A Harmless Motor-Car!
But do not fret about it! Come!

We'll off to Town



And purchase some!"

Lord Lundy,

Who was too Freely Moved to Tears, and thereby ruined his Political Career.

Lord Lundy from his earliest years
Was far too freely moved to Tears.
For instance if his Mother said,
"Lundy! It's time to go to Bed!"
He bellowed like a Little Turk.
Or if

his father Lord Dunquerque
Said "Hi!" in a Commanding Tone,
"Hi, Lundy! Leave the Cat alone!"
Lord Lundy, letting go its tail,
Would raise so terrible a wail
As moved

His

Grandpapa

the

Duke

To utter the severe rebuke:

"When I, Sir! was a little Boy,

An Animal was not a Toy!"

His father's Elder Sister, who
Was married to a Parvenoo,

Confided to Her Husband, "Drat!
The Miserable, Peevish Brat!
Why don't they drown the Little Beast?"
Suggestions which, to say the least,
Are not what we expect to hear
From Daughters of an English Peer.
His grandmamma, His Mother's Mother,

Who had some dignity or other,
The Garter, or no matter what,
I can't remember all the Lot!
Said "Oh! that I were Brisk and Spry
To give him that for which to cry!"
(An empty wish, alas! for she

Was Blind and nearly ninety-three).

The Dear old Butler

thought—but there!

I really neither know nor care
For what the Dear Old Butler thought!
In my opinion, Butlers ought
To know their place, and not to play
The Old Retainer night and day

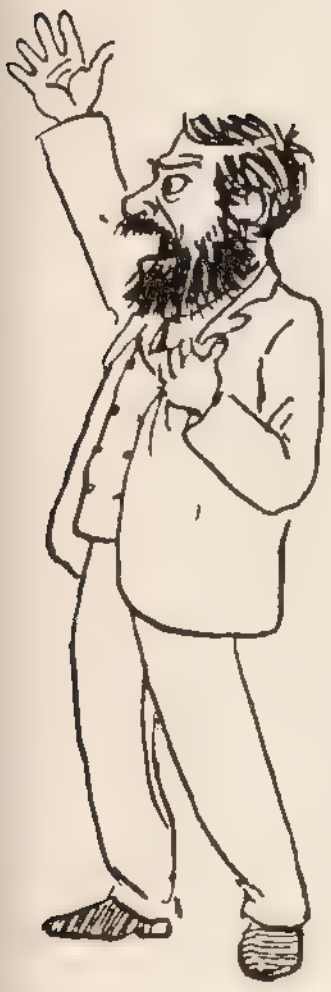
I'm getting tired and so are you,
Let's cut the Poem into two!

* * * * *

Lord Lundy

(SECOND CANTO)

It happened to Lord Lundy then,
As happens to so many men:
Towards the age of twenty-six,
They shoved him into politics;
In which profession he commanded
The income that his rank demanded
In turn as Secretary for
India, the Colonies, and War.
But very soon his friends began
To doubt if he were quite the man:
Thus, if a member rose to say
(As members do from day to day),



"Arising out of that reply . . . !"

Lord Lundy would begin to cry.
A Hint at harmless little jobs
Would shake him with convulsive sobs.

While as for Revelations, these
Would simply bring him to his knees,
And leave him whimpering like a child.
It drove his Colleagues raving wild!
They let him sink from Post to Post,
From fifteen hundred at the most
To eight, and barely six—and then
To be Curator of Big Ben! . . .
And finally there came a Threat
To oust him from the Cabinet!

The Duke—his aged grand-sire—bore
The shame till he could bear no more.
He rallied his declining powers,
Summoned the youth to Brackley Towers,

And bitterly addressed him thus—
"Sir! you have disappointed us!
We had intended you to be
The next Prime Minister but three:
The stocks were sold; the Press was squared:
The Middle Class was quite prepared.
But as it is! . . . My language fails!

Go out and govern New South Wales!"

. . . . .

The Aged Patriot groaned and died:

And gracious! how Lord Lundy cried!

Rebecca,

Who slammed Doors for Fun and Perished Miserably.

A Trick that everyone abhors
In Little Girls is slamming Doors.
A

Wealthy Banker's

Little Daughter

Who lived in Palace Green, Bayswater
(By name Rebecca Offendort),
Was given to this Furious Sport.

She would deliberately go

And Slam the door like
Billy-Ho!

To make

her

Uncle Jacob start.

She was not really bad at heart,
But only rather rude and wild:
She was an aggravating child. . . .

It happened that a Marble Bust
Of Abraham was standing just
Above the Door this little Lamb
Had carefully prepared to Slam,
And Down it came! It knocked her flat!

It laid her out! She looked
like that.

. . . . .

Her funeral Sermon (which was long
And followed by a Sacred Song)
Mentioned her Virtues, it is true,
But dwelt upon her Vices too,

And showed the Dreadful End of One
Who goes and slams the door for Fun.

. . . . .

The children who were brought to hear
The awful Tale from far and near
Were much impressed,

and inly swore
They never more would slam the Door.
—As often they had done before.

George,

Who played with a Dangerous Toy, and suffered a Catastrophe of considerable Dimensions.

When George's Grandmamma was told

That George had been as good as Gold,
She Promised in the Afternoon
To buy him an *Immense BALLOON.*
And

so she did; but when it came,

It got into the candle flame,

And being of a dangerous sort

Exploded

with a loud report!

The Lights went out! The Windows broke!
The Room was filled with reeking smoke.
And in the darkness shrieks and yells
Were mingled with Electric Bells,
And falling masonry and groans,
And crunching, as of broken bones,
And dreadful shrieks, when, worst of all,
The House itself began to fall!
It tottered, shuddering to and fro,
Then crashed into the street below—
Which happened to be Savile Row.

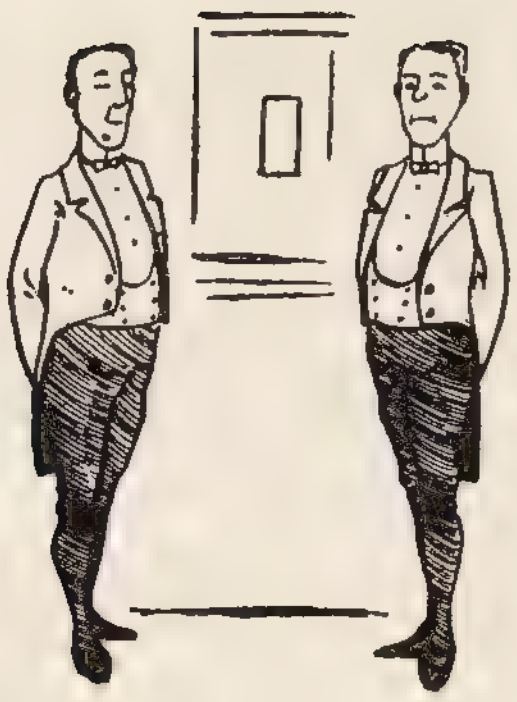
. . . . .

When Help arrived, among the Dead

Were Cousin Mary,

Little Fred,

The Footmen



(both of them),

The Groom,

The man that cleaned the Billiard-Room,

The Chaplain, and

The Still-Room Maid.

And I am dreadfully afraid

That Monsieur Champignon, the Chef,

Will now be

permanently deaf—

And both his

Aides are much the same;

While George, who was in part to blame,

Received, you will regret to hear,

A nasty lump

behind the ear.

MORAL

The moral is that little Boys

Should not be given dangerous Toys.

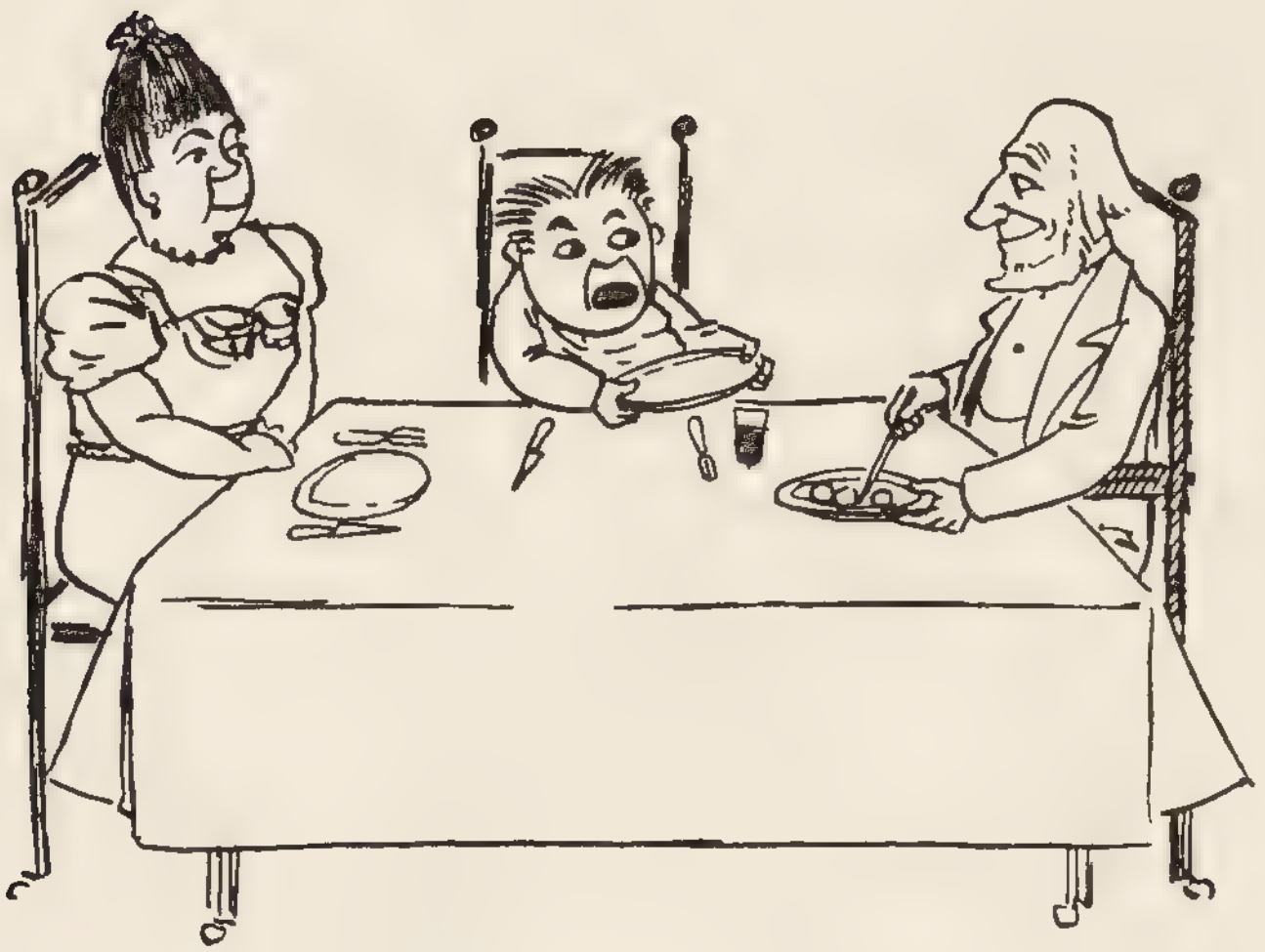
Charles Augustus Fortescue,

Who always Did what was Right, and so accumulated an Immense Fortune.

The nicest child I ever knew
Was Charles Augustus Fortescue.
He never lost his cap, or tore
His stockings or his pinafore:
    In eating Bread he made no Crumbs,
        He was extremely fond
            of sums,

To which, however, he pre-
    ferred
The Parsing of a Latin
    Word—
He sought, when it was in
    his power,
For information twice an hour,

And as for finding Mutton-Fat
Unappetising, far from that!
He often, at his Father's Board,
Would beg them, of his own accord,



To give him, if they did not mind,
The Greasiest Morsels they could find—
His Later Years did not belie
The Promise of his Infancy.

In Public Life he always tried
To take a judgment Broad and Wide;

In Private, none was more than he
Renowned for quiet courtesy.
He rose at once in his Career,
And long before his Fortieth Year
Had wedded

Fifi,

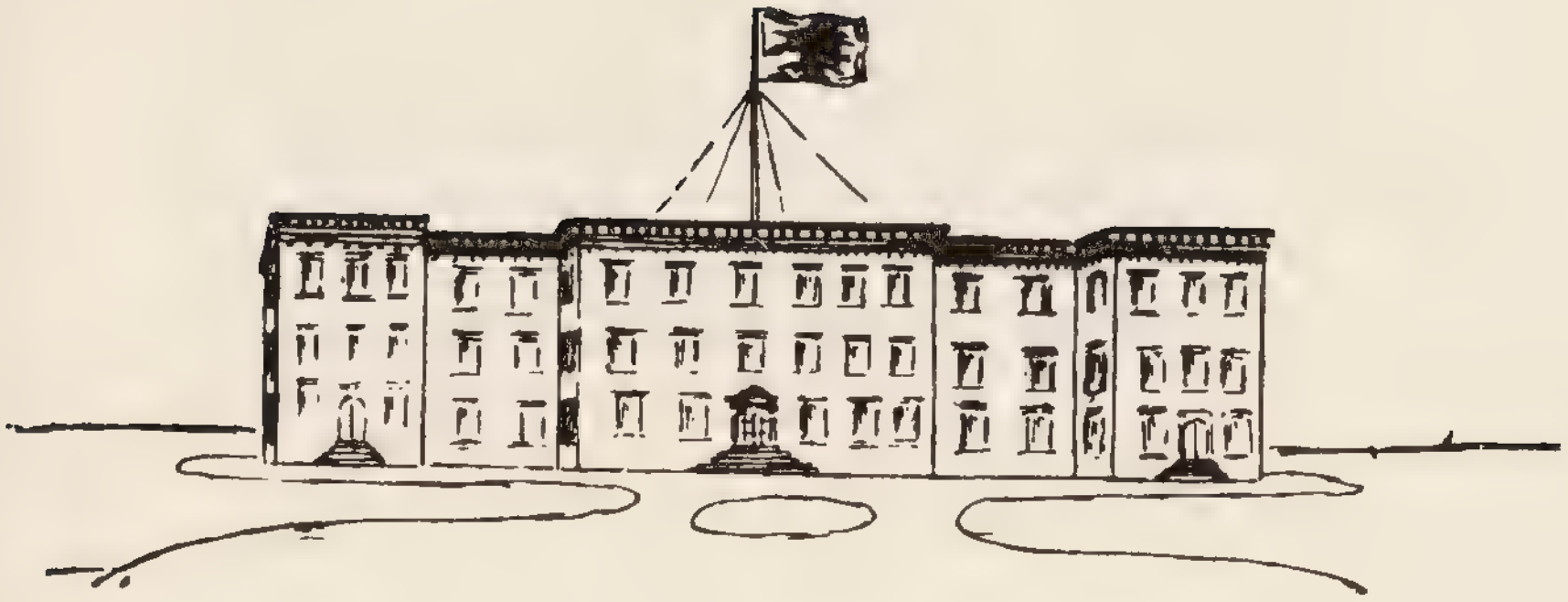
Only Child

Of Bunyan, First Lord Aberfylde.

He thus became immensely Rich,

And built the Splendid Mansion which

Is called



"The Cedars,
Muswell Hill,"
Where he resides in Affluence still,
To show what Everybody might
Become by

SIMPLY DOING RIGHT.

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